



Fire Program Analysis – Preparedness Module

Wage Grade Salary Calculation

Issue: How will the Federal Wage System (a.k.a.: Wage Grade Salary) be represented in FPA PM?

Background and Assumptions:

Three pay grade structures are present within the Federal pay system that applies to FPA PM: General Schedule, Federal Wage System (FWS), and Senior Executive Service. The Federal Wage System (also known as the Federal Blue Collar Schedule) uses a unique pay structure commonly referred to Wage Grade pay systems. This includes not only Wage Grade, but also Wage Leader, and Wage Supervisor categories. Use of these pay categories within the fire management program typically corresponds to warehouse/cache positions, mechanics, and equipment operators.

The actual calculation of these rates is extremely complicated and varies greatly throughout the United States. The purpose of this white paper is to address how the system will represent these rates.

Issue:

After investigating the pay procedures for Federal Wage System (FWS), it was found to be extremely cumbersome and complicated to implement within the FPA PM system. Pay rates vary from area to area. These areas do not correspond with the General Schedule locality areas. The specific areas can vary from year to year. In some cases this information may be negotiated locally and may not be readily available for incorporation into the system.

The Federal Wage System website (<http://www.cpms.osd.mil/wage/>) explains this system as follows:

“The Department of Defense (DoD) conducts FWS wage surveys and establishes pay rates for all regular FWS wage schedules and most special FWS wage schedules. One of the key statutory principles underlying the FWS is that employee pay rates are to be maintained in line with prevailing levels of pay for comparable levels of work in the private sector within a local wage area. To carry out this statutory principle, the Defense Civilian Personnel Management Service, Wage and Salary Division conducts annual wage surveys to collect wage data from private sector establishments. The Wage and Salary Division works with both management and labor conducting local prevailing rate wage surveys to develop and adjust pay schedules under the FWS.”

The ability to represent these unique pay situations within the software with any degree of accuracy is marginal. An informal survey with the field found that most planners currently use an equivalent General Schedule (GS) wage to represent the FWS pay structure. This allows the planner to address local variances in the FWS structure.

Recommendation:

Do not build a FWS pay structure within the system. Instruct Geographic Areas and Fire Planning Units to choose an equivalent GS wage for any FWS staffing fire resources when they submit or change fire resource staffing structure. Fire planners will be instructed to do the same when spending out their “Fire Support” budget during the Manage Budget process.

This business practice will be included in training and user documentation.